Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

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Agenda

9:30am – 9:35am	Welcome and Objectives
9:35am – 9:50am	National Overview
9:50am – 10:00am	Statewide Overview
10:05am -10:45am	Promising Local Strategies
10:45am – 11:00am	BREAK
11:00am – 11:30am	*Activity Part One*: <u>What Do We Know?</u>
11:30am – 12:00pm	*Activity Part Two*: <u>What Do We Have, What Do We Need, and Where Can We Find It?</u>
12:00pm – 12:30pm	Beginning to Conceptualize a Local Strategy Open Discussion
12:30pm	Adjourn

Today's Objective

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Provide a basic overview of youth and young adult homelessness

- Review what's already being done in Maryland

- Inform local planning through discussion of promising strategies

- Assist Local Management Boards in:

  - identifying and connecting with youth experiencing homelessness

  - identifying barriers to providing services

  - identifying gaps in data, resources, and services

  - identifying potential local stakeholders and partners

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- Individuals under the age of 25 who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

- "Highly vulnerable population of young people who are on their own and without a home during a critical period of their psychological, emotional, social, educational, and career development" (MD Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Task Force, 2013)

- Note that definitions of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth vary
    – Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HEARTH Act)
    – Health and Human Services (Runaway & Homeless Youth Act)
    – McKinney-Vento education definition

Why are youth and young adults unaccompanied and homeless?

- Home may not be safe
  - Experienced family conflict, which might include physical and/or sexual abuse

- Home may not be supportive
  - 20 to 40% of young people identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) and may experience homelessness as a result of family rejection

- Home may not exist
  - youth aging out of foster care are at high risk for becoming homeless during the transition to adulthood

Subpopulations

- LGBTQ youth – 20-40% of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth versus 5-7% of general youth population

- History of foster care involvement

- Pregnant/parenting

- Youth with disabilities

- Trafficked youth (sex and labor trafficking)

- Undocumented

What We Know

- Youth age 12 to 17 are more at risk of homelessness than adults
- Estimates of the number of pregnant girls experiencing homelessness are between 6 and 22%
- 46% report being physically abused
- 38% report emotionally abused
- 17% report being forced into unwanted sexual activity
- 75% have dropped out or will drop out of school

Consequences:

- Increased likelihood of high-risk behaviors
- Greater risk of severe anxiety and depression, suicide, poor health and nutrition, and low self-esteem
- Increased likelihood of exchanging sex for food, clothing and shelter or dealing drugs to meet basic needs
- Difficulty attending school

What We Know

- Distinct group with unique needs

- Resilient, creative, experts on their lives

- Want to live independently and contribute to community – consistently express desire for housing and employment

- Often interested in helping other youth and advocacy to change systems

- Key partners in local efforts to address youth homelessness

Federal Overview

- Runaway & Homeless Youth Act
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Opening Doors
- US Interagency Council on Homelessness Framework to End Youth Homelessness – 2012 & "Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness, a Coordinated Community Response" – 2015

2014 Point in Time Estimates

PIT DATA

On a single night in January 2014…

45,205 homeless children & youth were unaccompanied

86.1% were youth (18–24)

13.9% were children (17 & under)

23.3% of all homeless children & youth were unaccompanied

Unaccompanied homeless children & youth in sheltered & unsheltered locations

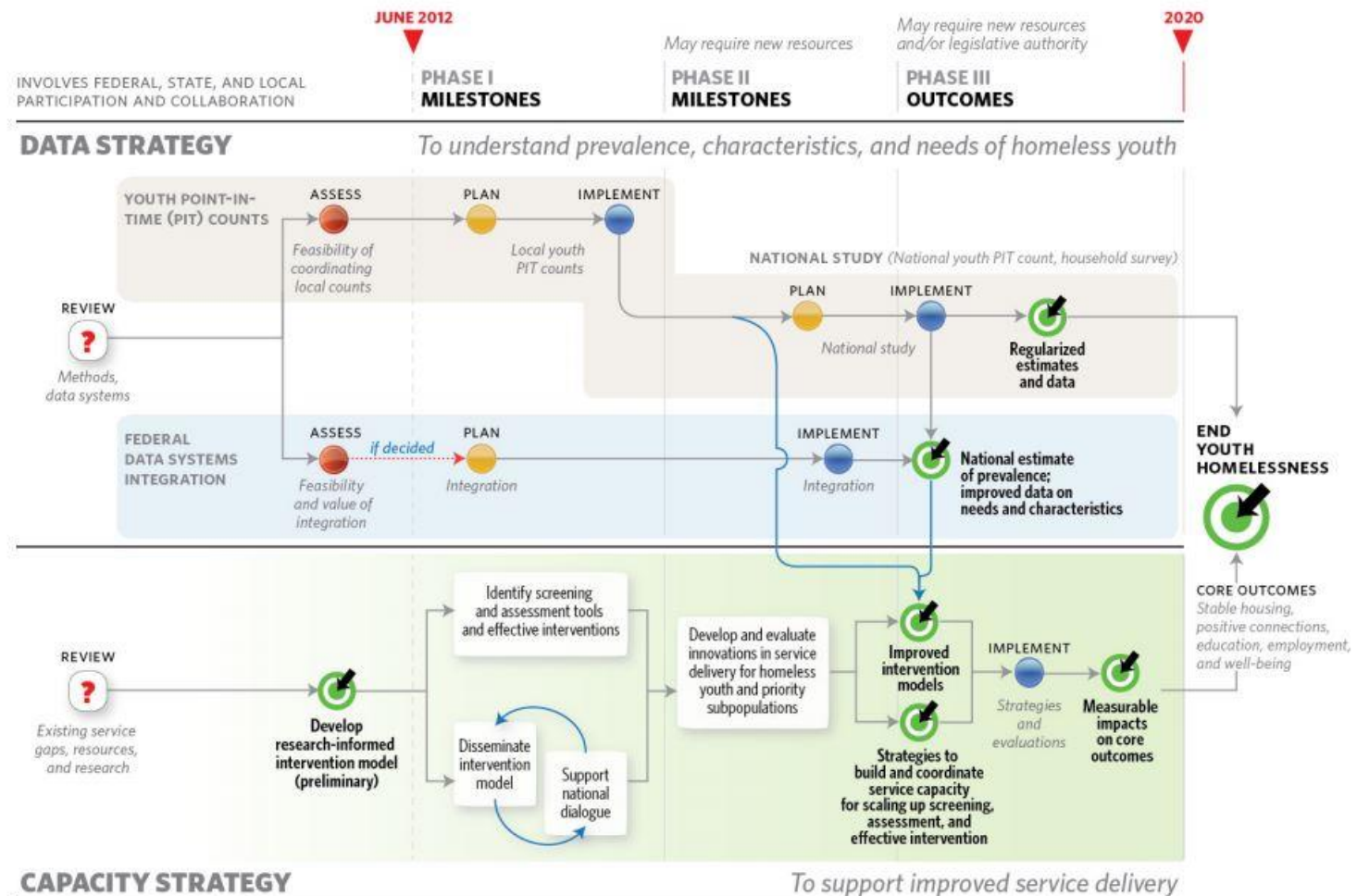**40.7%** | **59.3%**
Unaccompanied Children

54.4% | **45.6%**
Unaccompanied Youth

US Interagency Council on Homelessness Framework

Figure 1: USICH Framework Logic Model for Ending Youth Homelessness

Statewide Overview

- 2013 Task Force - Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth - Recommendations
  - Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness - Framework
    - Housing and Supportive Services Youth Workgroup
  - Joint Committee on Homelessness
  - Youth REACH MD (Reach out, Engage, Assist, & Count to end Homelessness)

Statewide Overview

Department of Human Resources

- Developed a unit for homelessness and co-chairs the Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Journey Home Youth and Young Adult Strategic Planning Group
- Thrive@25
- Family Finding Program

Maryland State Department of Education

- Hired Homeless Education and Neglected and Delinquent Specialist

Statewide Overview

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Effective January 1, 2014, Medicaid eligibility was expanded for youth formerly in foster care. Those youth are eligible for Medicaid regardless of income at any time up to age 26.

Department of Juvenile Services
- DJS' participation with the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Task Force has impacted the department's re-entry strategic planning process.

Motor Vehicle Administration
- Cutting the cost to $1 for Motor Vehicle Administration-issued identification cards for homeless Marylanders.

Children's Cabinet Definition

Those individuals under the age of 25 who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; this includes those living in motels, hotels, camping grounds emergency or transitional shelters, cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, and bus or train stations for whom it is not possible to live with their parent, guardian, or relative and have no other safe alternative living arrangement

- For Juvenile Services this is limited to those youth in their custody
- For Human Resources it is limited to those youth in their custody who are not residing in their court-ordered placement

Statewide Overview

- 2014 Point-In-Time Estimate, 411 children and youth experienced homelessness in Maryland

Homeless Unaccompanied Children	Sheltered	Unsheltered
	22	8
Homeless Unaccompanied Young Adults	Sheltered	Unsheltered
	277	104
TOTAL	299	112

Youth REACH MD Preliminary Data

Number of youth under 25, unaccompanied and not in a stable, secure living environment.

Jurisdiction	Youth
Anne Arundel	40
Baltimore City	543
Baltimore County	48
Lower Shore	25
Prince George's	127
Washington	42
Total	825 (67%)

Youth REACH MD Preliminary Data

Reasons for not living with a parent/guardian/foster parent	
Kicked-out	69%
Chose to leave	45%
Released from jail/detention with no home to return	5%
Parent/guardian experiencing homelessness	5%
Parent/guardian died	5%
Other	6%

Youth REACH MD Preliminary Data

Reasons for being kicked out	
Fighting with parent/guardian	41%
Left home and could not return	24%
Told to leave before they turned 18	20%
Told to leave after they turned 18	5%
Pregnant or got someone pregnant	7%
Sexual orientation/gender identity	7%
Use of drugs/alcohol	14%
House was too small	11%
Other	11%

- Average Age = 21

Highest Grade Completed	
No education	0.5%
8th grade or less	5%
9-11th grade	34%
High school diploma	43%
GED certificate	8%
Some college credits	7%
College degree	1%

Youth REACH MD Preliminary Data

Pregnant/Parenting	
Pregnant	5%
Parenting	34%
Average number of children	1.8
Children NOT living with parent	54%

Youth REACH MD Preliminary Data

Placement History and Healthcare Status	
Foster care history	20%
Lived in group home	26%
Stayed in mental health facility	22%
Stayed in juvenile detention facility	36%
Stayed in adult jail	39%
Do not have health insurance	37%

Youth REACH MD Preliminary Data

Income	
No income	59%
Full-time job	4%
Part-time job and/or temporary job	9%
Money from 'under the table' work	9%
Cash assistance from a government-funded program	8%
Social Security/disability payments	5%
Unemployment benefits	2%
Hustling/selling drugs	13%
Exchanging sex for money/rent/etc	7%
Panhandling/begging on the street	10%
Child support	3%
Money from family members or friends	8%

Principles for Serving Youth

Youth leadership

- Youth must be partners in the decision making process
- Policymakers and service providers must actively and regularly solicit input from those youth and use that input to guide their practice

Positive youth development

- Services to youth should enhance the abilities of the youth themselves
- Engage youth in decision-making processes
- Policymakers and service providers should purposefully help them to develop:
  - competence (intellectual, behavioral, and social skills)
  - connections (positive bonds with people and institutions)
  - character, confidence, and healthy adult relationships

Principles for Serving Youth

Trauma-informed care

- Services must be appropriate for youth who have experienced abuse in their homes and/or trauma on the streets
- Establish emotional and physical safety, reinforcing personal strengths, and finding opportunities to regain a sense of control and empowerment
- Take care to not add further trauma

Developmentally appropriate services

- Services must be youth-specific and incorporate recent advances in adolescent brain development research
- Youth-specific services are sensitive to the unique emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development of youth

Principles for Serving Youth

Non-judgmental approach

- Accept youth as they are and avoid being judgmental
- All youth are valued, regardless of the behaviors they exhibit
- Facilitate healthy behavior changes
- Celebrate any positive change made by a youth

Explicit focus on meeting the needs of sub-populations

- Designed to meet the needs of key subpopulations, which experience unique harms, barriers, and vulnerabilities

Challenges in Serving Homeless Youth

- Lack of data on youth homelessness
- Difficulty identifying/locating Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
- Fear, lack of trust, and stigma
- Trauma
- Age & developmental stage, process of transitioning into adulthood
- Varying definitions of "homeless" and "youth"
- Lack of housing and services for 16-24 year olds

Promising Local Strategies

1. Data on the prevalence, characteristics, and needs of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
2. Community plan
3. Outreach and engagement
4. Accessible and flexible continuum of housing options
5. Rapid access to appropriate and effective services
6. Build economic stability through education, employment, and/or public assistance

Strategy 1: Data

- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth are a hidden population that has historically been undercounted and underserved. Data is needed to inform interventions, policies, resource allocation, etc.

- Existing data sources:

  - Local Continuums of Care – HMIS and Point-In-Time counts mandated by Dept. of Housing and Urban Dev

  - Youth REACH MD

  - McKinney-Vento school data

  - MD Youth Risk Behavior Survey

  - Other sources?

Dept. of Housing and Urban Dev. Point-In-Time Count

- Each Continuum of Care must conduct a biennial count of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness
- 2012 - Federal Youth Count Pilot Initiative in 9 communities nationwide
- 2013 – Dept. of Housing and Urban Dev began requiring that Continuums of Care report on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth as a separate population
- 2013 - Maryland Dept. of Housing and Community Dev. provided Point-In-Time Innovation Grant to support Continuum of Care efforts to count Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Youth REACH Maryland
http://www.youthreachmd.com

- Effort to obtain accurate, detailed information on the number, characteristics, and needs of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Maryland

- Demonstration project created by legislation in 2014 and launched in 8 counties (6 Continuums of Care) in fall 2015

- Methods include surveying, street count, provider count, and administrative data collection

- Next Youth REACH count will take place in 2016

- http://www.wbaltv.com/news/group-tries-to-count-homeless-youth/35561054

#icount

Strategy 2: Community Planning

- Assess capacity to prevent and end youth homelessness

- Identify gaps in resources and services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, including sub-populations

- Engage stakeholders with diverse perspectives, including youth/young adults, direct service providers, public and private systems (e.g., education, child welfare, juvenile justice, housing, and health), faith community, funders, and others

- Develop shared vision and collective agreement on strategies and actions to achieve the vision, foster greater collaboration and coordination, and build community of concern around youth/young adult homelessness

Sample Community Plans

- National Network 4 Youth "What Works to End Youth Homelessness" (https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-What-Works-to-End-Youth-Homlessness.pdf)

- King County, WA – "Comprehensive Plan to Prevent Youth & Young Adult Homelessness in King County by 2020"

- LGBTQ Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Plans – Dept. of Housing and Urban Dev. "LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Initiative"; Two pilot sites: NEST, Greater Houston Area, TX and Safe & Supported, Hamilton County (Cincinnati), OH

Strategy 3: Outreach & Engagement

- Unaccompanied homeless youth may be afraid to look for assistance or unaware of services available to them

- Engaging youth may include outreach, drop-in youth services, meal programs, case management, and referrals to other agencies/resources

- Recognizing that some homeless youth may not be ready or willing to enter long-term housing or service programs, outreach staff and drop-in centers can address immediate needs while encouraging them to eventually utilize services and exit homelessness

National Safe Place

www.nationalsafeplace.org

- National Safe Place seeks to ensure the safety of homeless and runaway youth by providing crisis intervention services, including emergency shelter and family reconciliation, when possible. It is currently being implemented in 40 states

- Safe Place is a community program where local partners create a network of places where youth in crisis can get immediate help 24/7. Safe Place programs designate schools, fire stations, libraries, and other youth-friendly organizations as Safe Place locations, which display the yellow and black Safe Place sign, and provide a hotline number

- Launched in 2011 and covers urban, suburban, and rural areas. Youth in crisis can call hotline to connect directly with a Safe Place Coordinator or can ask for help at a Safe Place location or from any Metro bus driver, and within 45 minutes a Safe Place Coordinator will arrive to provide assistance

- Program Goals:

    1) Assess immediate safety and help create a safety plan as needed

    2) Refer and transport clients to emergency shelter and/or safe housing services as needed

    3) Provide all clients with effective crisis intervention services

    4) Engage homeless youth and build rapport and trust in Safe Place as a support system for crisis housing needs

Drop-In Centers

- Low-barrier community-based location
- Offers immediate services, such as food, clothing, showers, laundry, bus tokens, personal hygiene supplies, and links to shelter or other emergency resources
- Builds engagement in more intensive services, such as case management, counseling, employment training, and links to housing
- Youth Empowered Society (YES) Drop-In Center, Baltimore, MD opened in 2012

- Street outreach and drop-in program serving urban, suburban, and rural areas

- Serves youth ages 12-24; 75% female, 25% male; 50-60% pregnant or parenting

- Services – connection to youth living on streets or unsafe locations; drop-in hours with meals, clothing, hygiene supplies, access to showers and laundry, connections to case management, mental health screening, employment programs, financial literacy, academic support, shelter, and housing

- For more info: www.youthcontinuum.org

Strategy 4: Housing

- Accessible and flexible continuum of housing options
  - Emergency Shelter
    - Under 18 shelters
    - Young adult shelters
  - Time-limited (transitional)
  - Non time-limited (permanent)
    - Permanent supportive housing for YYA with disabilities
    - Affordable housing for YYA with low incomes
- Other housing supports, such as rental or security deposit assistance

Maryland Resources

- Emergency/drop-in
  - Loving Arms Youth Shelter (Baltimore City)
  - Promise Place, Latin American Youth Center (Prince George's)
  - YES Drop-In Center (Baltimore City) - the only drop-in center serving youth ages 14-25
- Transitional (1-2 years): 2 shelters
  - AIRS City Steps (Baltimore City) - serving ages 18-24 in three facilities
  - DSS (Prince George's) – serving ages 13-24 in three facilities, including mother-baby
- Permanent: 1 facility
  - Restoration Gardens (Baltimore City) - restricted to youth without children of their own

Housing Principles

- Housing First approach
- Type and intensity of services offered varies based on the need of the individual youth/young adult
- Flexibility to re-enter housing types and cycle throughout the spectrum if their current needs or abilities change
- Housing models that deliver positive youth development services combine stable and affordable housing with life skills that youth will use throughout adulthood
- Trauma-informed
- Involve youth/young adults in design and evaluation

Host Home Model

- Arrangement between community member and service provider in which the community member provides UHY with shelter, food, and sometimes transportation, while service provider provides program coordination, host support, and case management services

- Flexible – can be used for emergency shelter or longer-term transition-like housing; can be used in rural, suburban or urban communities

- Economical – costs include overall coordination, host recruitment, host support, and case management

Program Highlight

Avenues for Homeless Youth - Twin Cities, MN

- Shelter and transitional housing for 200+ Unaccompanied Homeless Youth ages 16-22 per year through LGBT host home program, and suburban and urban host home programs

- Key features - Careful and voluntary youth referrals, youth driven matching process, consistent support of youth and hosts

- More info: www.avenuesforyouth.org

Strategy 5: Supportive Services

- Medical, dental, mental, and behavioral health care
- Case management
- Advocacy and referral
- Provision of basic needs
- Education & employment supports
- Independent living skills training
- Access to vital records and state-issued ID
- Financial literacy
- More?

Strategy 6: Economic Stability

- Support youth in building economic stability through education, employment, and access to public benefits

- Children and youth experiencing homelessness have extensive education-related rights under federal and Maryland law

- Federal Workforce Opportunity Investment Act (WIOA) provides opportunities to serve UHY and disconnected youth

- Access to public benefits, such as SNAP, TCA, and disability benefits, is critical for UHY

Education Protections - McKinney-Vento Act

- Federal law mandating that each homeless child or youth must have "equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education," as other children and youth

- School system must proactively review and remove barriers to homeless children's enrollment, attendance, and academic success

- Protections related to school stability, transportation, immediate enrollment, supportive services, dispute process, school district liaisons

Tuition Waiver

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Tuition Waiver

- Established in 2014
- Similar to higher education tuition waiver for Maryland Foster Youth
- Eligibility
  - Not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
  - Homeless (as defined in McKinney-Vento)
  - Maryland resident for 1 year
- Statutory eligibility verification process applies

Tuition Waiver

- Youth must:
  - Have high school diploma or GED
  - Complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1 prior to academic year for which applying
  - Be enrolled before turning 25
  - Be enrolled full-time or part-time for associate, bachelor's, or vocational certificate at Maryland higher ed institution

Program Highlight

Students Homeless Initiative Program (SHIP) – Frederick County

- A volunteer non-profit community organization that addresses the urgent needs of the hundreds of Frederick County students encountering homelessness by providing clothing, food, funding of extracurricular activities, and emergency shelter where no other options exist

- More Info: www.shipfrederick.com

Transaction to Transformation

Youth on Fire's three-tiered service delivery system includes the following:

- Tier 1 - Services: a) hot meals; b) showers; c) laundry; d) lockers; e) voice-mail and phone; and f) computers in a safe and welcoming drop-in center

- Tier 2 - Supports: a) mental health services; b) medical care; c) HIV, STI and viral hepatitis screenings; d) housing search; e) enrollment in health insurance and benefits; f) educational workshops; and g) supported referrals for other self-identified needs

- Tier 3 - Opportunities: a) Peer Outreach and Education program; b) Youth Advisory Board; c) Speaker's Bureau; d) Art and Talent Shows; e) Hiring Committee; and f) Community Give Back Days, in which members clean up the surrounding neighborhoods of Youth on Fire and Harvard Square

Activity: What Do We Know?

WHAT are your subpopulations? How many youth in your community are experiencing homelessness? Each year, how many young people

- Age out of the foster care system into uncertain housing?

- Are served in shelters or temporary housing?

Are there other unique challenges facing young people in your jurisdiction?

WHERE can you find youth experiencing homelessness?

Thinking about youth experiencing homelessness that you serve, **what are the primary barriers** to providing services?

What are the barriers to connecting youth to services?

Activity: What Can We Build On?

- What opportunities exist for youth experiencing homelessness to connect to services, family or other caring adults? Are there enough options to meet the current need? What might you expand?

- To what extent have key stakeholders come together to develop a shared vision and plan for reducing youth homelessness in your jurisdiction? Who are the stakeholders already at the table and who should be at the table?

- Do stakeholders working with homeless youth regularly share information and coordinate their efforts?

Contact Info

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